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**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children
H.B. 6430: An Act Concerning Children in the Recession
Submitted by Sherry Linton-Massiah
Connecticut Association for Human Services
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The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) would like to thank Senator Musto, Representative Urban and members of the Select Committee on Children for the opportunity to offer public comment and testify in favor of H.B. 6430: An Act Concerning Children in the Recession.

CAHS applauds the work of the Task Force on Children in the Recession and the legislative outcomes of that group. As the Early Care and Education Policy Analyst of the organization, I have the opportunity to convene and dialogue with a variety of early care and education providers who speak frequently of the benefits of now having at least 30 days' notice when there will be major to the state's child care assistance program, Care4Kids, as a result of the previous Children in Recession legislation.

CAHS supports the intent of this bill to further ensure positive outcomes for Connecticut's children and families with the implementation of the Results-Based Accountability approach to the administering of services by the Department of Social Services, Department of Education, and the Department of Health through annual report cards.

In addition, it is our hope that this bill will be expanded, particularly as it relates to early care and education. Especially now when families are experiencing heightened unemployment, it is our recommendation that this bill mandates the extension of eligibility for child care assistance to families experiencing interruption in employment. It is our belief that this expansion can take place without limiting the number of families served if the legislature remains committed to having the Care 4 Kids program funded at the FY 11 approved funding of \$103.4M. Extending eligibility during employment interruption, from the current eligibility of one month after the month of interruption, should be determined based on the available the appropriated funding of \$103.4 M.

As strategies are being considered to address the needs of children and families in our state during this unusual period of crisis, we must also look to the needs of those providing the needed

care to children. Often, child care providers accept children into their program in good faith that Care 4 Kids reimbursements will follow. Too often, those payments do not arrive and when they do, they arrive well outside the 30 days of originally expected processing of the parent's application. Providers would benefit from the implementation of some level of presumptive eligibility, especially in cases where the application processing time has gone beyond the 30 days outlined in the child care assistance regulations. Providers have bared the brunt of the losses as it relates to cost of care, with reimbursement rates that have not increased since 2001.

Consideration should be given for some off-setting of cost, via reimbursement for services once the application process exceeds the required 30 days for completion. This policy change would share the risk between the provider and the state; it would create a more equal situation. This option should also be considered within the availability of appropriated funding no less that of the \$103.4 M originally approved for FY11.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these recommendations to expand this legislation to expand the quality of life for children and families attempting to move out of the recession.

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